

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 08791 301516Z

46

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 IO-13 AID-20 OMB-01 CU-04 SS-15 NSC-10

L-03 H-03 NIC-01 EB-11 SIL-01 LAB-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 RSR-01

/132 W

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R 301500Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5868

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 8791

FOL CALCUTTA TEL RPTD FYI

QUOTE

P R 231140Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

TO RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 8339

INFO RUSBAY/AMCONSUL BOMBAY 1688

RUSBAS/AMCONSUL MADRAS 1633

C O N F I D E N T I A L CALCUTTA 1358

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PINS, IN

SUBJ: THE BANGLA BANDH

REF: A. NEW DELHI 7860; B. CALCUTTA 1290

1. DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE ELEVATED
THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CONTROVERSY AND MANEUVERINGS INVOLVED
IN THE CPI-SPONSORED BANGLA DANDH (REF B) WHILE THE CPI
AND THE CONGRESS WERE HAGGLING OVER THE TARGET OF THE BANDH
(I.E., WHETHER IT WAS THE GOWB OR AN ASSORTMENT OF EVILS
LIKE MONOPOLISTS, LANDOWNERS, HIGH PRICES, UNEMPLOYMENT),
THE CPI(M) DROPPED A BOMBSHELL BY REVERSING ITS EARLIER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 08791 301516Z

NEGATIVE DECISION AND ANNOUNCING ITS SUPPORT FOR THE BANDH.

THIS HAD THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF UNIFYING THE CONGRESS (WHICH HAD BEEN SPLIT WITH THE OLD GUARD WANTING 'ACTIVELY' TO OPPOSE THE BANDH WHILE THE YOUNG MEN, YOUTH CONGRESS AND CHHATRA PARISHAD, WANTED TO TAKE A 'PASSIVE' ROLE). CONGRESS IS NOW WORKING ALL OUT TO MAKE THE BANDH A FLOP.

2. MEANWHILE THE CPI AND CPI(M) HAVE BEEN LOCKED IN A VERBAL DUEL OVER THE TARGET OF THE BANDH. CPI POSITION REMAINS THAT HIGH COST OF LIVIING, UNEMPLOYMENT, MONOPOLISTS, ETC., ETC. ARE THE TARGETS. CPI(M) INSISTS THAT TO SAY ALL THIS MEANS THAT THE BANDH IS ANTI-GOVERNMENT (SINCE IT HAS FAILED TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THESE SEVERAL EVILS). AS THIS MAKES A GOOD DEAL OF SENSE TO MOST PEOPLE, THE CPI POSITION IS AWKWARD TO SAY THE LEAST, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT THEORETICALLY STILL SUPPORTS THE RAY MINISTRY THROUGH THE PDA.

3. CONGRESS IS TAKING THE CPI(M) CHALLENGE VERY SERIOUSLY. IT HAS SENT THE YOUTH BRIGADES ON DOOR-TO-DOOR (AND SHOP-TO-SHOP) CAMPAIGNS TO CONVINCE PEOPLE TO STAY OPEN ON FRIDAY, PLEDGING POLICE AND CONGRESS PROTECTION. OVER THE WEEKEND SEVERAL CLASHES TOOK PLACE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND CPI(M) YOUTH. PROCESSIONS (BOTH FOR AND AGAINST THE BANDH) WHICH WERE WITNESSED BY US HAVE BEEN WELL-ORGANIZED AND PEACEFUL. IN CONVERSATIVONS TODAY BOTH GOWB MINISTER OF FINANCE AND GOWB CHIEF SECRETARY TOLD ME THAT WHILE BANDH ISSUE WAS TROUBLESOME TO THEM, IT WAS NOT OF FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE; BOTH NOTED THAT PEOPLE OF THIS STATE WERE WEARY OF POLITICS OF CONFRONTATIBK AND VIOLENCE (WHICH WAS COMMON DURING 1967-70 PERIOD) AND WOULD IN THEIR OPINION NOT SUPPORT BANDH. ON THE OTHER HAND, TO THE EXTENT THE BANDH IS SEEN AS A PROTEST AGAINST THE COST OF LIVING INCREASES AND SHORTAGES, OUR FEELING IS THAT IT WILL GET CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT. CONGRESS LINE THIS REGARD INVOLVES EFFORT TO EXPLAIN FACTORS CAUSING PRICE INCREASES, DESCRIBE THEIR EFFORTS TO CHECK THEM AND ABOVE ALL TO VASSERT THAT BANDH WON'T HELP MATTERS--TRUE BUT NOT TERRIBLY PERSUASIVE.

4. AESTHETIC NOTE: FOR FIRST TIME IN OVER EIGHTEEN MONTHS, CITY OF CALCUTTA IS AGAIN BEDECKED WITH MULTI-COLOR AND

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 08791 301516Z

ARTISTICALLY DRAWN (CPI(M) WALL-PAINTINGS. PICKERING

UNQUOTE
MOYNIHAN

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